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SUBJECT: A/S FRAZER BREAKFAST WITH SPLM

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Classified By: POL: Michael Honigstein for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On January 25, Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer, Roger Winter, and the Charge met with three senior SPLM officials resident in Khartoum: Yassir Arman, Chairman of the SPLM National Assembly Caucus; Malik Agar, Government of National Unity (GNU) Minister of investment; and Deng Alor, GNU Minister of Cabinet Affairs. They said that the SPLM was drifting due to the leadership of GNU First Vice President Salva Kiir. They explained that Kiir is the only one who could lead the SPLM, but said he did not represent the mainstream, and warned that the party could collapse if Kiir did not take action. The trio also said the NCP has attempted to divide and neuter the SPLM leadership in the GNU. A/S Frazer responded that the U.S. interest was the transformation of the governance of Sudan and emphasized that SPLM officials should manage their ministries to effect this change. On Darfur, Arman, the SPLM representative in Abuja, said that a new dynamic is linking the rebels with Chad and Eritrea. End summary.

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SPLM Drifting Apart  
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¶2. (C) The three SPLM leaders explained the dynamics within the SPLM and its growing lack of cohesion. Deng said that Kiir had inherited absolute power, but seemed unable to handle it. A number of SPLM leaders from Garang's inner circle -- which includes Arman, Deng and Agar - discussed this drift with Kiir on January 9 in Juba.

¶3. (C) Deng described the January 9 meeting as positive. The Ganrangists allayed Kiir's fears that they were trying to remove him, and Kiir had agreed to create an interim body to manage the SPLM. According to Deng, Kiir had been getting bad advice from Bona Malwal and Lam Akol, which has caused chaos in the SPLM and risked splitting the movement. The three requested U.S. assistance in sensitizing Kiir to the need for greater SPLM coherence, a request they have also made to influential African heads of state.

¶4. (C) Arman referenced the 2004 struggle between Garang and Kiir factions, the latter supported by Malwal and Akol, and acknowledged that Kiir had inherited an SPLM/A dominated by Garang supporters. Kiir had chosen to move his own people into various sensitive positions, including the GNU Foreign Minister. Unfortunately, this played into the hands of the NCP and northern security forces. Arman acknowledged that Kiir was the only logical leader of the SPLM, and the Garang loyalists were prepared to follow Kiir if he started to lead

the mainstream.

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NCP Seizes Opportunity  
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¶5. (C) Arman said that the NCP had wasted no time in exploiting the change of leadership in the SPLM. NISS Chief Salah Ghosh had passed Kiir a report on an internal SPLM conspiracy to replace Kiir. It was the tested NCP tactic of dividing opposition. Kiir was also told that the Americans did not want him. However, Arman said their goal was to reform the SPLM and keep Kiir, and they have made headway toward this goal. Kiir had agreed to establish a leadership convention that would establish clear policies, including a position on Darfur. The interim working group that Kiir agreed to establish would set policy until the SPLM convention, which had been moved from March until June.

¶6. (C) Deng said that the NCP was also unhappy that other African leaders were talking to the SPLM. Ghosh had personally entered one of Kiir's meetings during the AU summit to see who was there. The NCP believed that the SPLM had helped frustrate Bashir's quest for the AU Chairmanship (all three expressed satisfaction at Bashir's failure). Deng concluded that the NCP wanted the South to separate so the NCP could rule without constraints in the North. Arman asked A/S Frazer to help convince Kiir that Garang's vision of Sudanese unity should prevail, in spite of Kiir's known position on separation. Arman said that Uganda, South Africa, and Ethiopia could also help in this manner, especially Obasanjo and Mbeki.

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SPLM Challenges  
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¶7. (C) The trio described some current problems facing the

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SPLM/A, most seriously the fact that the SPLA soldiers had not been paid, including the southern JIU forces to be paid by the GNU. Deng said the problem was now resolved and the SPLA would be paid three months' back salaries.

¶8. (C) Another problem was the viability of the SPLM as a national party. In the North, the SPLM had started registering large numbers, which alarmed the NCP. However, Kiir had refused to release funds to Abdel Aziz, SPLM organizer in the North. Six months earlier, Deng said the party was gaining strength, but the failure to take clear positions and meet overly high expectations had undercut its appeal, which could jeopardize the entire movement.

¶9. (C) Arman believed that clarity was the paramount issue. The NCP had taken advantage of SPLM policy drift to counter SPLM growth in the North. The group around Kiir has played into NCP hands by eschewing national issues. Arman stressed that the SPLM could not meet its stated goals unless it remained a formidable source in the center. Arman said that even the choice for succession would only be possible if the SPLM was strong in the GNU.

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The USG Position  
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¶10. (C) A/S Frazer responded that many in the U.S. believed Garang's vision of national unity was not widely supported in the South and Kiir was seeking to consolidate his position with his constituency. While a leadership vacuum was inevitable considering Garang's strength, the party should be strong enough to continue, and party development was therefore critically important. Frazer pointed out that every member of the Politburo in South Africa was qualified to assume the top position, if this were necessary.

¶11. (C) Frazer continued that while friendship between the SPLM and USG officials was important, the interests of the U.S. were her first priority. State transformation and the weakening of the NCP are jeopardized by an ineffective SPLM. She noted that those who produced, not those who complained, would help keep the SPLM united and assist Kiir's leadership. Good results were the test, and it was essential that the SPLM leadership in the GNU not be, in Charge's words, "me too" partners. The SPLM must take control of their portfolios and strengthen their place in government.

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SPLM on Darfur  
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¶12. (C) On Darfur, Yassir Arman described an emerging dynamic that had created an Eritrean, Chadian, and rebel axis, with Turabi playing a supporting role in Khartoum. All were united by their opposition to the NCP. Arman described the Abuja talks as a "bazaar" with too many negotiators that would "take us nowhere." Nonetheless, negotiations were strengthened by the NCP's fear of a UN military force being deployed. Arman felt that the priority should be disarming the militias and the jinjaweed. He believed that the 7,000 SPLA troops still in the East could be integrated into Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) and sent to Darfur for this purpose, a concept that Garang had repeatedly espoused. The Charge noted that it would take six months to stand up the JIUs, at the rate of a battalion a month. By this calculation they could be in place by the end of the year, which would be an affirmative step to resolving the crisis.

¶13. Deng interjected that Obasanjo had advised Kiir to brief Sassou-Nguesso on the SPLM view of Darfur. Obasanjo told Kiir that "someone" from the NCP indicated that the South was only focused on separation and therefore not interested in Darfur. Arman, the SPLM representative in Abuja, felt that the SPLM could do more on Darfur but said he was only empowered to act on direct orders from Kiir.

¶13. A/S Frazer has cleared on this cable.

¶14. Tripoli minimize considered.  
HUME